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News release Communiqué



The Ontario Heritage Foundation

Ministry of Citizenship and Culture

La Fondation du patrimoine ontarien

Ministère des Affaires civiques et culturelles

2nd floor
77 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2R9
(416) 965-9504

2e étage
77 ouest, rue Bloor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2R9
(416) 965-9504

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TWO MINISTRIES SIGN AGREEMENT TO PROTECT ONTARIO'S CAROLINIAN ZONE

A memorandum of understanding to protect the unique natural habitat in Ontario's Carolinian vegetative zone was signed today by Natural Resources Minister Vincent Kerrio and Citizenship and Culture Minister Lily Munro.

The Carolinian zone lies south of an imaginary line connecting Grand Bend and Toronto, extending along the north shore of Lake Erie from the Detroit River to the Niagara River.

"This narrow belt is the only area in Canada where you can find trees like the sweet chestnut, pawpaw, honey locust and Kentucky coffee tree," Mr. Kerrio said. "It is also home to the opossum, the blue racer snake, and the Carolina wren, to name just a few."

"To ensure that these species continue to enrich our natural heritage, we are confirming our commitment to a program which will conserve and protect 36 critical natural areas in the Carolinian zone," Mr. Kerrio added.

The areas represent southern deciduous forests, wetlands, prairies and savannahs and include 26 MNR-designated Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest and eight very significant Ontario wetlands.

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Three national conservation organizations, the World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy of Canada and Wildlife Habitat Canada have together pledged \$1.8 million to the Carolinian Canada program. The province has committed \$1.8 million in matching funds, for a total of \$3.6 million.

Dr. Munro explained at today's news conference: "The provincial funding will be administered by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, an agency of my ministry. The Foundation has the mandate to preserve and promote Ontario's cultural and natural heritage."

The main feature covered under the memorandum of understanding -- which was witnessed by the three conservation agencies -- is a land protection program aimed at conserving the 36 critical areas through private stewardship and land acquisition.

Under the private stewardship component, landowners of designated areas will be encouraged to maintain the land in its natural state. This will be achieved through:

- awards for private stewardship,
- a tax rebate program,
- agreements with property owners,
- advice and assistance on land management.

Purchase of the most significant properties would be considered only if other methods of protection are not feasible.

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Carolinian Canada -3

The Carolinian Canada program was conceived in 1984 by the World Wildlife Fund and developed in co-operation with other member agencies of the Natural Heritage League, a coalition of 28 public and private sector organizations which includes the Ministries of Natural Resources and Citizenship and Culture.

"Preservation of our natural heritage is an important part of heritage activities," said Dr. Munro, "I am delighted that the protection of Carolinian Canada, an area of unique and special habitat, is being undertaken as a shared program with an equal blend of funding and co-operation between public and private sectors."

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EDITORS: Please note a fact sheet and map are attached.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Norm Richards
Parks and Recreational Areas Branch
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
TORONTO (416) 965-5160

Bryan Howard
Ontario Heritage Foundation
Ministry of Citizenship and Culture
TORONTO (416) 965-8199

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CAROLINIAN CANADA

Background

- In 1984, the Natural Heritage League (a coalition of 28 public and private sector organizations) launched "Carolinian Canada."
- The purpose of the program is to consolidate private and public efforts toward conserving vanishing natural areas in southwestern Ontario.
- The Carolinian zone lies south of an imaginary line connecting Grand Bend and Toronto, extending along the north shore of Lake Erie from the Detroit River to the Niagara River.
- The Carolinian region is one of the richest natural regions in Canada. It includes windswept coastal dunes, luxuriant marshes, tall grass prairies and remnant southern deciduous forests.
- Protection of this area is considered of the highest importance by the League for several reasons.
 - First, because of the area's claim to many habitats and species found nowhere else in the province -- or, in some cases, the country. Over 2,000 kinds of native plants and 400 species of birds have been documented in the region, including some of Canada's most rare.
 - Second, there are few existing protected areas and public lands in the zone.
 - Third, the area's high population density places many natural areas unique to Canada, such as woodlands and wetlands, at risk.

The Carolinian Canada Program

- In the past three years, program participants have developed an effective conservation strategy for the Carolinian region, undertaken field projects on endangered species and identified 36 key natural areas in the region.
- These 36 areas include 26 Ministry of Natural Resources Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest and eight of the province's significant wetlands areas.

- Under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministries of Natural Resources and Citizenship and Culture, the 36 areas will be protected through a land protection program involving both private stewardship and land acquisition.
- Under the program, owners of significant areas will be encouraged to maintain the land in its natural state through landowner recognition and assistance programs.
- Acquisition of designated lands will be considered for only the most significant areas, after all attempts at private stewardship have been exhausted.

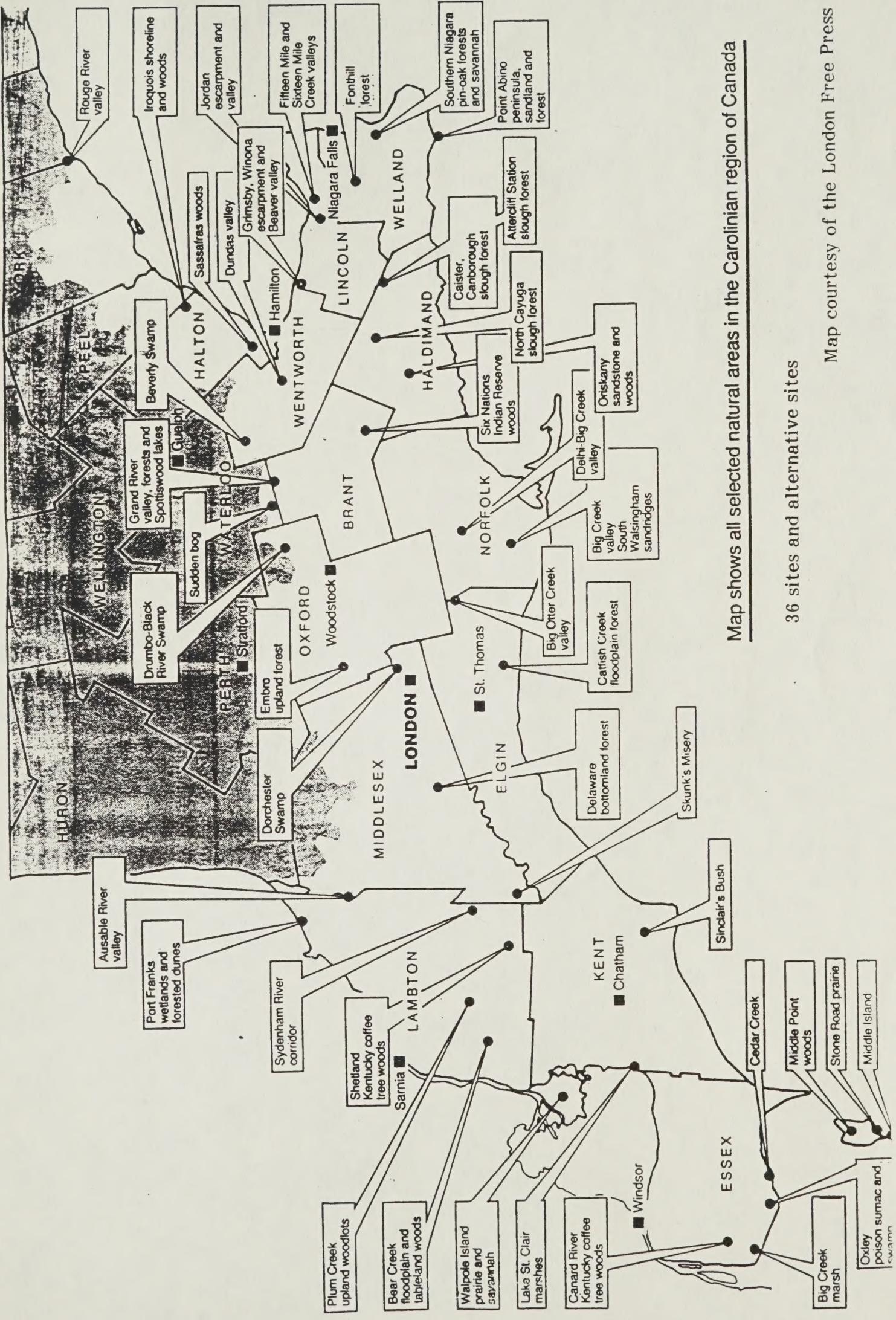
Funding

- Initial funding support for the project was provided in 1984 through a \$200,000 donation to the Ontario Heritage Foundation from the Richard Ivey Foundation which was matched through the Bicentennial Challenge Fund for a total of \$400,000.
- Current funding for the project is an equal blend of private and public money, with \$1.8 million in Ontario government funding matched by an equal amount from Wildlife Habitat Canada (\$900,000), Nature Conservancy of Canada (\$750,000), and the World Wildlife Fund (\$150,000), for a total \$3.6 million, over three years.
- The Ontario Heritage Foundation will administer the provincial funding on behalf of the Ministries of Natural Resources and Citizenship and Culture.

Program Benefits

- Provincially and nationally important elements of natural heritage will be preserved for present and future generations.
- Private participation means heritage protection will be achieved at a fraction of the cost to the province.
- Heritage protection will involve the full co-operation and support of private landowners.

CAROLINIAN CANADA



Map courtesy of the London Free Press

